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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method comprising imaging a characteristic size of a defective region of a data storage medium by combining a plurality of data readback signals received from different tracks adjacent the defective region, and indicating that the defective region is unreliable if a ratio defined by a size of a portion of the defective region with a less-than-expected readback signal strength compared to a total size of the defective region is greater than a preselected threshold.

2. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising categorizing the defective region by comparing the characteristic size of the defective region to a plurality of predefined category profiles.

Claim 3 (Cancelled)

4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2 wherein the categorizing step comprises identifying the defective region as likely being characteristic of a scratch.

Claims 5-7 (Cancelled)

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the imaging step comprises representing an array of data points each having independent coordinates X and Y with respect to the data storage media.

9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein the imaging step comprises representing an array of data points wherein each X and Y coordinate is associated with a corresponding Z coordinate relating to a strength of the associated readback signal.

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2 wherein the categorizing step comprises identifying the defective region as likely being characteristic of corrosion.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
modifying a list of bad sectors in a manner that depends upon the imaging step;
and
retaining the modified list in a memory.

12. (Previously presented) A data storage apparatus comprising a list of bad sectors that is modified according to the method of claim 11 and stored in a memory.

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, further comprising:
assigning a value to each of the defective regions according to the categorizing step; and
reworking the data storage medium if an aggregation of the assigned values exceeds a predetermined threshold.

Claims 14-16 (Cancelled)

17. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 in which the imaging step comprises receiving all of the plurality of readback signals from a transducer head of a sealed data storage apparatus in which the medium is rotated.

Claims 18-24 (Cancelled)

25. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:
a data storage medium comprising a defective region; and
means for assigning a category for the defective region by combining a plurality
of data readback signals received from different tracks adjacent the
defective region, wherein the means for assigning comprises means for
generating a topographical image of the defective region of the media
surface.

26. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 25 in which the means for
assigning comprises defining a profile for each of at least 3 categories defining a set that
includes the category assigned for the defective region.

27. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 25 in which the means for
assigning is completed while the combination of readback signals has been compared
against at most 30 profiles each corresponding to a respective category, the assigned
category being one of the respective categories.

28. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 25 in which the means for assigning comprises a category identifier indicating whether the defective region is likely to contain a scratch.

Claim 29 (Cancelled).

30. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 25 in which the means for assigning is configured to receive all of the plurality of read signals from the transducer head while the media storage and transducer head are sealed in a substantially opaque chamber.

31. (Previously presented) The method of claim 4 wherein the categorizing step identifies the defective region as likely being characteristic of a scratch if the characteristic size comprises a length that is greater than a width by a factor of about 2.5.

32. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:
a data storage medium; and
a controller configured to categorize a defective region of the medium by
combining a plurality of data readback signals received from different
tracks adjacent the defective region; and
a memory storing a plurality of predefined profiles associated with likely types
of defects associated with respective characteristic sizes of the defective
region, wherein the predefined profiles comprises a characteristic size

associated with the defective region likely being characteristic of a scratch.

Claims 33-34 (Cancelled).

35. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 34 wherein the characteristic size comprises a length that is greater than a width by a factor of about 2.5.

36. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 33 wherein the predefined profiles comprises a characteristic size associated with the defective region likely being unreliable for data storage.

37. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein the characteristic size comprises a ratio defined by a size of a portion of the defective region with a less-than-expected readback signal strength compared to a total size of the defective region being greater than a presclected threshold.

38. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 32 wherein the controller images an array of data points each having independent coordinates X and Y corresponding to unique locations on the data storage medium.

39. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 38 wherein the controller images an array of data points wherein each X and Y coordinate is associated with a corresponding Z coordinate relating to a strength of the readback signal.

40. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 33 wherein the predefined profiles comprises a characteristic size associated with the defective region likely being characteristic of corrosion.

41. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 32 further comprising a memory storing a location of the defective region.

42. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 32 comprising a data storage device.

43. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 32, wherein the defective region contiguously extends across a plurality of adjacent tracks.